

Prairie Poems



Honore Jam Writers' Club

1942



Pam 811
M825p

Foreword

To write a foreword to a book of poems might be considered an easy assignment, but it has its difficulties. A foreword is, in the older sense of the word, an advertisement; it is in some measure a description of what is to be found herein. Poems, at their best, are songs, songs of the heart. They are conceived in a spirit of the most complete realism, because they are personal approaches to our personal worlds. Their value to the reader consists in their reality, the understanding that they may help to give of our thoughts of our circumstances, and thus, of all circumstances.

We do not offer our efforts as those of finished craftsmen, but as those who are aware of the impact of life's action upon our western plains and trying in our hesitant words to express the songs that we must sing. At one time in Canada's history, men and women felt the need to explore the prairies, to know what our country offered to them. Now we in our generation are attempting to chart our spiritual geography. May we offer these small journeys for your inspection?



67.4.18/13

Coming Home on Leave

He's coming home, my son has won his wings,
 Passed his exams and tests and all the things
 It takes to make a pilot for a plane,
 All the long weary months they have to tram.
 And now (he says) they get their wings today,
 And he'll be home a little while to stay.

I'll get a chicken, make an apple pie,
 (I hate to think how fast the days will fly);
 I'll have his favorite cookies, doughnuts, too,
 Dad says I've plenty for a threshing crew.
 But I just keep on adding more and more,
 The pantry shelves look like a country store.

He's coming home—on embarkation leave,
 With little silver wings upon his sleeves.
 Filling the house with laughter young and free,
 With boyish pranks and fun that's good to see.
 While dad and I look on feeling inside,
 The little homesick ache he tries to hide.

After he's gone—we'll grieve a while and then,
 Just plug along 'til he comes home again.

Edna Jacques.

Spring

(RONDEL)

As Spring awakes from her tranquil sleeping,
With robins' carols in Ville Marie,
On rainbow wings she alights as Psyche,
Where violets come shyly peeping.

Each blade and bud at her touch is leaping.
Her smile is greening each hill and lea,
As Spring awakes from her tranquil sleeping,
With robins' carols in Ville Marie.

Snow-wraiths and icicles fast went weeping
In silver rain from an April sea,
And blue-eyed Life with a kiss will free
Tulips and daffodils for my reaping.
As Spring awakes from her tranquil sleeping,
With robins' carols in Ville Marie.

M. O. Taylor

Wild Roses

I thought the roses ne'er would bloom
It was so wet and cold
But here, today, they blow for me
Most glorious to behold.
They quite intoxicate the air,
Intoxicate me still,
As they did when I was a child
And wandered at my will,
And found them lying on a bank,
Wild roses decked with dew.—
I stood in adoration there,
While rapture thrilled me through.
They were the magic of the morn,
Quintessence of a dream,
Those fragile discs of beauty spread
In elegance supreme.
They bloomed in hundreds on the bank
Brought in on summer's tide.
Pale pearly petals, like frail shells,
Lay scattered far and wide.
Their lovely presence seized my thoughts
Like an ethereal joy.
An ardour kindled in my heart
A sweetness nought could cloy.
And, so, today, they bloomed for me,
Their faces, open, fair,
Like some precocious children's are
With wide, clear wondering stare,
As if they saw a splendour bright
In everything around,
In shining land, and high blue sky
And grass upon the ground.
They thrilled with some life of their own
As if they secrets knew,
From whence they came, by whom they lived,
The why, and wherefore too.
Ah! Lovely things, of joys compound
To crown a summer dream!
Too few your days, but in my heart
You reign alone, supreme.

Elizabeth Goddard.

Autumn, 1943

The late surprising sun lights up the corners
of the street
With sudden radiance, and casting furtive shadows
On the tired autumnal grass, brings an unexpected
Peace. And as the sun comes, so rays of other
light
Shine in upon us. A lull before the storm, a
pause
For breath, a quiet time of prayer. We know
the storm
To come, the fury tasted yet unleashed in our still
Virgin land, unravished yet by showers of steel.
Winter will come, and in its cold we will
remember
The warming sun. Our Gettysburg is past, and
we can
See with valiant eyes the goal that we must reach,
The spring that is to come. Then grateful we,
who look
To winter's bleak endurance, for autumn's kindly
reign.

C. F. W. Goddard.

The Letter

This was a sunny day for me!
All life was touched to harmony,
And rose was painted on the grey
Because your letter came today,

A little square of Heaven it seemed
That opened a new world. I dreamed
Of home and love and you, my dear,
And radiant days, when you are here.

When you are here! I close my eyes
And know that I'm in paradise,
Because your letter came today.
And painted roses on life's grey.

E. A. Goddard.

Winter

(A DAY OF HOAR FROST)

~~The~~ world looks beautiful today,
Dame Nature had a busy night,
And ev'ry bough and tiny spray
Is now with furbelows bedight.

I think perhaps the dear old Dame
Felt sorry for their nakedness,
And so all hurriedly she came,
And made each one a spangled dress.

They longed to wear their robes of green,
But Nature knew 'twas not yet time,
And none more lovely could be seen
Than these she fashioned out of rime.

I gaze with rapture on the sight
Of Nature's winter wonder-land,
It fills my soul with pure delight,
In it I trace my Maker's Hand.

But rime is very fragile stuff,
'Twill only last a day or two,
A wind will quickly tear each "ruff",
Sun rays will pierce it through and through.

But while it lasts, I'll drink my fill
Of all this beauty, rich and rare,
Then memory shall hold it still,
And I thank God for sight so fair.

F. Helen Hyde.

The Language of Love

The language of love has no need of words
As hand clings to hand, though no sound is heard,
Kind thoughts without a'd of tongue or of pen
Will wing their way through to hearts of all
men.

The aged and the worn are learned and so wise,
The warmth of a smile reflects in their eyes,
What matter the day, what matter the hour?
There's life in a thought, there's courage and
power.

The youth and the maid no mere words express,
They heed not the loss nor seek a redress;
But deep down within that language they know
When heart calls to heart, for weal or for woe.

The man and his dog will blend as a song
The notes of their thoughts when jogging along,
The dog will reflect the mood of his friend,
Attuned to be gay or sympathy lend.

The birds of the air will answer the call
From forest to plain and sweet the notes fall;
While loved ones respond in cabin and hall,
To language of love so common to all.

Jean Broatch.

Crescent Park, Moose Jaw

How fast the glory of the garden fades
From Crescent Park!
And plots, in warmth of color clothed, will soon
Be cold and stark.

The chilling winds, unchecked by sentry leaves,
Will speed their way
Through trees and shrubs,—disrobing now at close
Of summer's day.

How sad, we say! Yet gratefully will we
Remember all
The joy with which kind nature did us thrill
From spring to fall.

What charming walks were ours in Crescent Park,
Mid rustling trees,
And richly varied flowers! And pleasant was
The genial breeze.

And forward we will look, and see beyond
The frost and snow,
And winter's night, another summer bright,
With life aglow.

* * *

A parable is this to you and me:
The summer's flown
From earth, and war's cruel winter now is here.
Hark grief's sad moan!

But, since the God of nature is our God,
We forward look,
And greet a blissful summer on its way:
So reads God's Book.

Through God's redeeming plan in Christ His Son
We yet shall see
A summertime of good for man, and it
Shall lasting be.

R. McNaughton.

To My Son

(IN THE FIRST CANADIAN DIVISION)

The instant I awake I think of you,
All through the days my thoughts are with you
too,
And as I work, or talk, or walk, or sing,
I am reminded of some little thing
You used to do.

"This was your favourite," I often say,
"That was a piece I often heard you play;"
I am reminded of some special joke,
Your "mop of hair," or of the way you spoke,
Your laugh so gay.

We mothers think of all the little things,
And treasure them; and now, when dread war
flings
Its fears and horrors into ev'ry heart,
And miles of ocean keep us far apart,
Had I but wings — —

Ah! then, my son, to you I'd quickly fly,
To care for you as in the days gone by;
Though this I cannot do, I still can pray
For your safe keeping each and ev'ry day
To God Most High.

Oh may He grant you His protecting care,
That in the final triumph you may share. — —
God speed the day when cruel war shall cease,
And all mankind shall walk in ways of peace.
This is my prayer.

F. Helen Hyde.

Lilacs

Enchanting fragrance sates the morning breeze
Like incense from some eastern temple fanned.
The rising sun's warm, golden beams expand
Elixir sweet, athwart my lilac trees,
Where robins gay with song pay lodging fees.
At open door in ecstasy I stand,
For what surpasses this in any land,—
Lilacs in perfumed mass for my heart's ease?

Forgotten now is winter's dread confine
With ice and chill, or prairie dust-storms' roil.
My garden is a paradise divine,
Surmounting obstacles of clime and soil.
These proudly-tossing purple plumes are mine,—
A victor's guerdon for long hours of toil.

M. C. Taylor.

The Sun's Laundry

The tired old Sun has gone to bed
With all his wash strung overhead.
He leaves it out for hours and hours,
But takes it down when e'er it showers.

The shirts are purple, pink and blue,
Pyjamas have a yellow hue,
While hankies are amazing clean
With big, plaid socks hung in between.

The Sun's wash is the gayest sight
To hang out every pleasant night;
But 'praps I should more modest be
And jest not at his lingerie.

M. C. Taylor.

Fog

O! Have you ever wakened to a two dimensioned
world
Where everything is length, and height when
fog-wreaths are uncurled,
And trees stand blurred and spectral, like objects
seen in dreams
While all things loom unreal, and nought is what
it seems?

Then you can feel the silence that holds the
earth in thrall, —
A waiting, listening silence, without e'en one
bird-call,
When not a leaf is drifting, and weeds are ghostly
still.—
With only two dimensions, you scarce can see
the hill.

And then the lambs come pacing where caraganas
grow.
They eat and soundless pass along, like objects
seen through snow,
Or prehistoric drawing you find on some cave-
wall.
Gray moving-picture creatures time's memory
might recall.

But soon a breeze comes flying and shakes the
tree-tops there,
Green blossoms in a minute and seems to leap
in air.
Yet, still among the bushes the spectral lambs
move on
Obscured in misty vagueness, like creatures of
earth's dawn.

Elizabeth Goddard

Little New Church

(NIPAWIN, SASK.)

New pews still fragrant from the saw and plane,
A little home-made pulpit bright as gold,
A strip of carpet for the tiny aisle,
A little vase that someone brought to hold
A bouquet of wild flowers, sweet and frail,
Glowing behind the tiny chancel rail.

A kitchen in the basement—heavy cups
And crude new tables made from odds and
ends,
A little cupboard . . . bright new pots and pans.
A big old-fashioned stove that somehow lends
An air of hominess to the whole place,
Like sweet good nature on a woman's face.

A little frontier church, new as a pin,
Set in a clearing near the river's edge,
Where penitents may go at eventide
To worship and renew their Christian pledge
And sing the old familiar hymns again,
United in the brotherhood of men.

It is a good and faithful things to know,
That men take God to guide them as they go.

Edna Jacques.

Through All Eternity

Through all eternity, my Dear,
I shall be at your side,
When earthly fetters fade away
Where trust and love abide.

Through all eternity, my Dear,
The forest's paths we'll roam,
We'll picnic by the running stream
Or by the deep sea foam.

We'll climb the heights together, Dear,
And feel the cool clear air.
The breathless wonders there behold
In atmosphere so rare.

Eons of time have we to live,
This cannot be denied,
Companionship and freedom know
That trust and love provide.

If I should linger here awhile,
When you have passed along,
I'll hear your voice at Eventide
On loving wings of song.

Jean Broatch.

From Another Viewpoint

Were I upon some distant star,
And gazing down upon the earth,
I think what would amaze me most,
Is that the things of greatest worth,
But by the few are recognized —
The trashy baubles greatly prized.

The man of wealth is fawned upon,
His pathway strewn with fulsome praise,
Though he may live a useless life,
And selfish pleasures fill his days.
The workingman for all men toils.
Yet gets mere pittance from the spoils.

The "movie queen" amasses wealth,
Is feted, lauded, glorified;
Those who excel in favoured sports,
By mobs are almost deified;
In wartime brave men give their all —
None but their kinsfolk mourn their fall.

So many people live their lives
With eyes that naught of beauty see,
Sunsets, and flowers, and landscapes fair
Arouse in them no ecstasy;
They only strive for useless dross,
And never realize their loss.

I sometimes think that God must weep
At the crass foolishness of man,
Who by his many wanton acts
Has sadly marred his Maker's plan
Oh help me, Lord, to choose aright
The things most precious in Thy sight.

F. Helen Hyde.

Sunday Morning in the Grain

At dawn I walked among the grain,
One morning in July,
One Sunday morning, ere the sun
Had risen in the sky.
The heavy oats were globed in dew,
Like rain arrested there,
And deathly still was that great field
As sleep had seized the air.
Low hills were lying to the south
All clothed in shining grain,
As I walked on to meet the sun
Along a narrow lane.
The field like roughened silver looked,
A gleaming pitted grey,
Or one might fancy tinkling bells
Within the dew bells lay.
And at the rising of the sun
Might ring a glad refrain, —
Call voluntary worship there
In that great field of grain.
The sun leaped like a fire of gold;
His rays spread far and fast;
Upon the low hills at my right
My shadow dark was cast.
It cut a swath of velvet black
Upon the silver bright;
It placed a halo on the head
Of rainbow tinted light.
I was amazed to see it there,
A miracle it seemed,
A haloed shadow on the hills;
I thought I must have dreamed.
But as I walked, it walked with me,
That morning in July,
When everything was fresh and fair
And peaceful 'neath the sky.
A thousand years might pass away
Ere could be seen again,
The lovely sight I saw that day,
When walking in the grain.

E. A. Goddard.

The Dawn

The dawn is a comforter
of delicate rosy hue
thrown across
the feet of the morning.

Jean Broatch

Friendly Trees

What a pity trees are too high
For us to see their friendly ways,
Every leaf, every twig, every branch
Nod to us as friend to friend
As we pass by.

Jean Broatch.

The Gossip

As tinkling brass
Shall thy days pass,
O daughter of contention
Withhold thy tongue
And hurt no one
Who errs not with intention.

'Tis better far
E'en one small star
Should hold thy vague attention.
At least no harm
Or false alarm
Results from such suspension.

It is thy way
To brag and bray,
And all thy merits mention.
But just heed this:
There is no bliss
Endures such poor pretention.

Jean Broatch.

Dream Magic

I had a pleasant dream one night,
'Twas not of grandeur, wealth, or fame,
Nor yet of loved ones far away — —
No one with gladness spoke my name.

Ere I awoke, suffused with joy,
Some rhyming lines ran through my mind,
I woke with these upon my lips,
But now no trace of them I find.

I know they spoke of what I saw,
Perhaps in language rich and rare,
By poet of a bygone age,
As we communed in dreamland fair.

The words are lost; nor can I paint
With artist's brush that which I saw,
Yet still it dwells within my mind,
A thing of beauty without flaw.

And yet 'twas but a simple thing,
A patch of grass within a dell,
And nodding on a slender stalk,
One dainty, azure-blue harebell.

A flower of England's lovely land,
Which oft I gathered years ago,
From some deep recess in my mind,
In dreamland caused my heart to glow.

F. Helen Hyde

Easter Morning

1943

Spring is filled with bright new bonnets,
Poets mad with timely sonnets,
And where each cheeky robin trills
Gay tulips flirt with daffodils.

Gray-faced winter fled the prairies
Scowling at the April fairies,
And who guessed snowdrifts there could screen
Such fragrant beds of tender green?

Deck the fane with many a flower.
Peal the chimes within its tower.
Let youth pretend, this holy morn,
That War is dead and Peace re-born.

M. C. Taylor

The Photo

You look so lonely standing there,
So lonely, yet so very brave.
No fear may touch your spirit save
The fear of God, Who's always near.

Faith, like a garment, wraps you round.
I see it luminous as light.
It makes your dark days warm and bright
And keeps you safe when ills confound.

Your face has lost youth's charm. What then?
Age brings a beauty of its own, —
An autumn radiance that alone
Exceeds the touch of brush or pen.

Your hands? Why, they are lovely too,
Wrinkled perhaps, by work well done,
In soothing, serving, tasks begun.
— A nurse's hands are strong and true.

Your heart? Your gallant loving heart?
A vallant ship that braves all storm
And keeps the sailor safe from harm.
With hope its anchor, fears depart.

You look so lonely, yet I know
Of friends you have a countless store, —
Are loved and blessed by many more,
And welcomed by both high and low.

And there are other things I see
A steadfastness and perfect trust
That things work out because they must
As time creeps to eternity.

• Elizabeth Goddard.

Visions of a Rainy Day

All through the long, long dreary night
I watched the beacon's circling light,
The wind blew whistling through the door,
Accompanied by the ocean's roar.

The gulls flew low, I heard their cry,
The clouds were scuttling 'cross the sky,
A gust of wind with sheets of rain
Blew hard against the window pane.

A flash of light, a thunderous noise,
As if the heavens the earth employs
To vent its pent-up wrath — It flays
The trees, the sea, its mounting waves.

Then drizzling rain, a sodden earth,
Into my mind of sudden birth
Come thoughts of home, a rainy day,
O wondrous treat, within I say,

Upon the chesterfield I'll rest
With papers, books that I love best,
A crackling fire upon the hearth
Of pungent logs, a smell of earth.

A singing kettle for the tea,
Some toast and bits of French pastry.
O blessed day with drizzling rain
I joy to think of you again.

Jean Broatch.

The Messenger

(QUATORZAIN)

A flash of white beneath a wind-swept cloud
That ends a day of tempest, hail and rain,
You soar as some fair flag of truce, endowed,
To tell me sun will surely smile again.
Your silver plumage gleams, a beacon ray
The heavens wide to search, while in the west
Her sombre cloak of storm is dropped by Day
To show a crimson dress, at Eve's behest.

Perchance you'll travel star-lit skies tonight
And bear beneath your wing some note of
peace
To soldiers waiting a command to fight. — — —
Perchance you'll speed to earth when God
shall cease
The gale, the lashing sea, the thunder's roll.
And bring the olive branch to some tired soul,

M. C. Taylor.

A Petition

Four years of war; — Oh God! when will it end?
An anguished mother's cry goes forth to Thee.
Four weary years have come and gone, since he
Our teen-aged lad embarked, to help defend
All that we hold most dear; his aid to lend
To rid the world of Nazi tyranny,
And all its ruthless bestiality — —
Dear God! Thy constant aid to him extend.

Millions of aching hearts throughout the world,
The lonely mothers, children, sweethearts, wives,
Unceasing pray that war flags soon be furled,
To put an end to waste of precious lives.
Lord, we beseech Thee, our petitions hear,
Return to us those whom we hold so dear.

F. Helen Hyde.

Nature

(SCENT)

I love the breath of blossoms fair
That in their seasons blow,
The fragrant pine and cedar trees
Aligned in stately row;
And dear to me, — the ocean born, —
Is tang of salt sea air
When fog creeps up about the land
And hangs its blanket there.
Who does not covet teasing scent
Of fruit, the long year through,
The Balm-in-Gilead when it droops
All heavy with the dew?

(SOUND)

I love the tapping of the rain
Upon my cottage low,
The chiming pebbles in a brook,
The sea's dirge, solemn, slow;
And sweet is Spring's caressing breeze
Amid the new green grass,
The music when through ripened corn
October breezes pass.
But though I love the rhapsodies
The birds come here to sing,
More thrilled I am when through the hills
The thunder echoes ring.

(COLOR)

I love a tree's black filigree
Against the west's red glow,
A golden sun, a silver moon,
The white of untracked snow,
The crimson, yellow, russet-brown,
When Autumn paints the leaves,
The eerie light in forests tall,
The gold in harvest sheaves.
Each passing month throughout a year
Unfolds its tinted flowers,
From violets to holly red,
Through June's rose-tinted bowers.

M. C. Taylor.

A Song of Victory

ITALY SURRENDERS

Swiftly on wings of joyous thought
Comes the beat . . . beat . . . beat of the victory
drums.

Into the hearts that freedom love
Comes the clanging sound of the victory bells.

Into the air and across the land,
And through the waters deep
The message comes . . . We've won . . . We've
won.

The wings grow strong of the dove of peace.
List and you'll hear in the voices of men
As you walk through lane and street
A gladsome note, a joyous song,
An eagerness in marching feet.
Step to a door as you pass along,
Where stars from the casement peep,
And you'll hear a song from a mother heart
That rises above the steeple bells
And the drums that beat . . . beat . . . beat.
And the joy in Heaven will know no bounds
As satan and all his hosts retreat;
Into the shadows they are cast once more,
For the harvest is here of the tares and the wheat.

So joyously ring the bells of peace,
And hark to the eager marching feet.
There's a song to sing and a prayer to say,
There's work to be done to bring nearer the day
When all will be well in the countries afar,
And the peace of the world no tyrant may mar.

Jean Broatch.